

REMARKS

Claims 1-32 were pending in this application when the present Office Action was mailed (March 22, 2005). Claims 1-6, 13, 15, 18-21 and 28 have been amended without narrowing the scopes of these claims. New claims 57-60 have been added. Accordingly, claims 1-32 and 57-60 are currently pending.

In the March 22, 2005 Office Action, all the pending claims were rejected and/or objected to. More specifically, the status of the application in light of this Office Action is as follows:

(A) The disclosure was objected to on the basis of an informality;

(B) Claim 13 stands objected to on the basis of an informality;

(C) Claims 1, 12-15, 21, 25, 26, 28 and 31 stand provisionally rejected on the basis of obviousness-double patenting over claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 12 and 14 of co-pending U.S. Patent Application No. 10/080,914;

(D) Claims 1, 8, 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) on the basis of U.S. Patent No. 5,168,886 to Thompson et al. ("Thompson");

(E) Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) on the basis of U.S. Patent No. 6,264,752 to Curtis et al. ("Curtis"); and

(F) Claims 2-7, 9-13, and 16-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 on the basis of one or more of the following references: Curtis, Thompson, applicants' admitted prior art, and U.S. Patent No. 6,716,330 to Hongo et al. ("Hongo").

A. **Response to the Rejection of the Specification**

The specification was objected to as lacking a serial number for an application referenced at page 18, line 3. Paragraph 61 has been amended to correct this informality. Accordingly, the objection to the specification should be withdrawn.

B. Response to the Objection to Claim 13

Claim 13 was objected to because the word "first" was inadvertently included at line 3. Claim 13 has been amended to remove the word "first" from line 3. Accordingly, the objection to claim 13 should be withdrawn.

C. Response to the Double Patenting Rejection

Claims 1, 12-15, 21, 25, 26, 28 and 31 were provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 12 and 14 of co-pending U.S. Patent Application No. 10/080,914. Without commenting on and/or conceding the merits of this rejection, and in an effort to expedite execution of the present application, applicants submit the enclosed terminal disclaimer. In light of this disclaimer, the double patenting rejection should be withdrawn.

D. Response to the Section 102 Rejection on the Basis of Thompson

Claims 1, 8, 14 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Thompson. Claim 1 has been amended to delete the reference to a manually accessible processing station, and to include further features regarding the transfer device that moves microelectronic workpieces between the processing stations and the input/output station. In particular, claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the transfer device includes a first end effector and a second end effector, each being rotatable relative to the other about a common axis. Support for this feature is included in Figure 4 and the associated discussion at pages 16 and 17 of the specification. Thompson appears not to disclose or suggest this feature. Instead, Thompson discloses a single robotic arm 52 that carries a portable module 50 which, in turn, supports a wafer. Accordingly, for at least the foregoing reason, the Section 102 rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn.

Claims 8, 14 and 15 all depend from claim 1. Accordingly, the Section 102 rejections of these claims on the basis of Thompson should be withdrawn for the foregoing reasons and for the additional features of these dependent claims.

E. Response to the Section 102 Rejection of Claim 1 on the Basis of Curtis

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Curtis. Curtis fails to disclose a transfer device including first and second end effectors that are each rotatable relative to each other about a common axis. Instead, Curtis discloses two separate robotic arms, each having a single end effector that is rotatable about a non-common axis. Accordingly, for at least the foregoing reason, the Section 102 rejection of claim 1 on the basis of Curtis should be withdrawn.

F. Response to the Section 103 Rejections

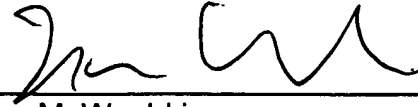
Claims 2-7, 9-13 and 16-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 on the basis of one or more of the following references: Curtis, Thompson, Hongo, and applicants' admitted prior art. None of these references appear to disclose or suggest, *inter alia*, "a transfer device including a first end effector and a second end effector, each being rotatable relative to the other about a common axis." Thompson and Curtis were discussed above, Hongo fails to disclose any details of an automated transfer device, and the passages of the present application cited by the Examiner as referencing prior art devices do not appear to disclose or suggest prior art devices with such a feature. Accordingly, for at least the foregoing reasons, and for the additional features of these claims, the Section 103 rejections of these claims should be withdrawn.

G. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the cited art. The applicant accordingly requests reconsideration of the application and a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-3257.

Respectfully submitted,

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